

“THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RISK”

What's the Definition of
Risk?

Is Risk Positive or
Negative?



Negatives

- Death
- Injury
- Dismemberment
- Illness
- Disease
- Pregnancy
- Divorce
- Addiction
- Arrest
- Fines
- Financial loss.



Positives

- Survival as a species
- Exploration / Humans spread all over the globe in 100,000 years.
- Immigration
- Business success
- Empowering to take a risk and succeed
- Bolster self-esteem
- Sense of competence
- Sense of control
- Cope with boredom
- Discovery
- Stagnation without it
- Mating
- War
- Invention
- Innovations in business and technology (Flight)
- Mating
- Hunting



Approaches to Risk Taking:

- Ban risky activities, thus making them go underground. Many recruiting activities are focused on the risk taker – recruiting at the X-Games, motocross races, etc. Seems unfair to ban the activities that made the recruit desirable.
- Proactive approach. Make Soldiers intelligent risk takers. Give them the means to make good risk decisions.



Demographics of a Risk Taker

- One person in five is born hard-wired to be a risk-taker.
- Risk-taking behavior is approximately 60% genetic. Most personality characteristics are 30 to 50% genetic (from studies of twins.)
- More risk-takers are male and the propensity for risk-taking declines with age.
- Large influences for a High Risk Sports Risk-Taker: Confidence and Peer Behavior.



Sensation Seeking

- A related trait describing the tendency to seek novel, varied, complex, and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take risks for the sake of such experience.
- Risk-takers are always sensation seekers.
- Sensation seekers may be risk takers.
- Reference: “Behavioral Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking” by Marvin Zuckerman.



How To Appeal to the Risk-Taker/Sensation Seeker

- Training using a Learner-Centered approach and dynamic instructors.
- Edgy media safety campaigns – “Personality and Risky Behavior: Communication and Prevention” by Donohew, Bardo, and Zimmerman showed that persuasive messages with novel components showed a 26.7% drop in marijuana use by Sensation Seekers.
- Activities/Alternatives-Examples: Motorcycle Rodeos, Skill Competitions, Group Ride Seminar, to be presented through a mentorship club.
- Advanced Training-Examples: Total Control Advanced Riding Clinic; Street Masters Course, etc.



The Relationship of Risk to Skill:

- Who gets hurt? – Usually, the untrained and those with minimal skills.
- Risk is relative to skill. Ski Instructors are high on SS, but low on accident rates. They know their limits and observe them.
- People unknowingly take risks because of inferior skills.
- What sport is highest on the risk scale?



Assessments to Determine Risk-Taking Propensity:

- Driving Test – Driver acceleration/deceleration behavior.
- Tests by various behaviorists – Zuckerman.
- PRAI (Physical Risk Assessment Inventory) by Llewellyn, UK.
- Individual assessment of an activity: Does it feel like it is happening in a dream?
- Leadership and mentoring club assessments.



Peer Influence

- Soldiers experience a lot of peer pressure and peer influence in their military living environment. Risk takers are more influenced by peer behavior than others. Joining a group will accelerate sport development, which can be good or bad, depending upon whether the Soldier joined a Motorcycle Stunt Group or an Army Mentoring Club. Soldiers need good influences and advanced training opportunities to help them navigate the line between passionate living and unacceptable danger.



